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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Thursday, August 6, 1931

(NOT FOR PUBLICATION)

Subject: "More Questions and Answers." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. D. A. and the Children's Bureau, U. S. Dept. of Labor.

Bulletins available: "Stain Removal from Fabrics", "The House Fly and How to Suppress It", "Fly Traps."

---ooOoo---

It looks very much to me as if this week ought to be called National Question Week. Questions of all kinds have been pouring in --- questions about canning and spots and stains on summer dresses and annoying household insects and even about looking after the baby in hot weather. I'll answer just as many questions as I have time today.

One of my very young friends somehow got her best pink dress in some fly paper last week and her mother wants to know how to take that sticky substance off without harming the dress. Fortunately fly paper is not a stubborn stain and with the right treatment comes off very easily. Sponge the stain with either carbon tretrachloride or some other solvent or dip the spot in and rub. All resonous substances --- and fly paper is one of them --- can be removed by what the bulletin on stain removal calles "organic solvents." These solvents are turpentine, benzol, carbon tetrachloride, chloroform, wood or denatured alcohol, ether, kerosene or gasoline. That's quite a long list to choose from. It's a useful list to remember, too, at this time of year, when one may sit down on fly paper in the house or run into pine pitch on picnics in the woods.

Speaking of fly paper reminds me that the Kansas State Board of Health has a recipe for home-made fly paper which, they say, costs only a cent a sheet, if you make a dozen sheets. You take two pounds of rosin and heat it up with one pint of castor oil until the mixture looks like molasses.

What, Clementine? You just turned on your radio? And didn't hear what this recipe was for? Oh, mercy me --- No. Not Sunday dinner. This is a Kansas recipe for homemade fly paper. I never made any fly paper myself, but I'm sure the people out in Kansas know what they are talking about.

Well, to continue. When you have heated up the rosin and the castor oil, take an ordinary paintbrush and smear the mixture while hot on any kind of paper--- old newspaper, if you like. Then lay the papers around the room where needed, but well out of reach of cats, dogs, canaries and little girls with pink dresses.

Fly papers and other fly traps, however, are only emergency measures. They'll catch a few annoying flies that are in the room today, but they won't get at the basis of the trouble. To control flies effectively it is necessary to treat their breeding places, and prevent them from increasing. If you want some reading matter on the subject, I'd like to recommend two bulletins, one called "Flytraps and Their Operation". A very serious, scientific title, isn't it? And another called "House Flies and How to Suppress Them". Another bulletin that means business. You can tell it by that firm word "suppress."

So much for flies and fly paper.

"Is it true that buttermilk can be used to clean copper and brass?" asks another letter.

Quite true. This is one of several useful materials for cleaning these two metals. The tarnish may be removed by dissolving in weak acids or by friction. Buttermilk and warm vinegar were both used by our grandmothers to keep their copper kettles shining. If these or any other acids are used, the metal must be thoroughly washed afterward and rubbed dry. Rubbing it with dry whiting is the best way to remove the acid, for the whiting not only takes up the moisture but gives the metal a brighter luster than when acid alone is used.

If you want to clean entirely by friction, use rottenstone mixed with oil. After applying it, rub the metal bright with a soft clean cloth.

Two questions today are about canning. The first has to do with a rubber taste in canned tomatoes. All the tomatoes put up by a New York State lady last summer came out with a strong rubber flavor. Why? And how to avoid it this year?

The trouble was probably that she didn't wash her jar rubbers sufficiently before using them. New rubbers are often packed with a coating of fine powder, like rubber dust, all over the surface. The powder, naturally, has a strong rubber taste. Be on the safe side and give your new rubbers a good bath in hot water before using them. Of course, every housekeeper of my acquaintance knows that new rubbers of the best quality must be used each year for canning. Old rubber loses its elasticity and may cause imperfect sealing and thus cause spoilage of the food. Rubbers of good quality are needed to withstand the high temperature of processing. Good rubber is elastic --- not brittle, hard or easily broken. Test a ring by doubling it together and pressing on the fold with the finger. The rubber should not crack under this treatment. It should stretch to twice its length and return without any change of shape.

Have you ever used tin cans for your home canning? Several people have been inquiring about that lately. A good many women are using them today and finding them practical and satisfactory.

They have several advantages over glass jars. In the first place, there is no danger of breaking them, either during canning or afterward. Then they are easier to handle than glass jars when you are processing them under pressure. The tin heats through more easily than the glass, and it may be plunged in cold water immediately after they come out of the canner. This rapid cooling stops the cooking inside the can at once and makes a better

product. Finally, the larger opening in the newer type of can makes it easier to pack some foods in cans than in jars. One disadvantage is that you can't see the canned product. This means that unless you label the cans immediately, there may be confusion. Some night when you want to serve string beans, you're very likely to open a soup mixture. Paper cement will hold the labels on the tin.

The type of tin can which is rapidly replacing all others is called the sanitary or rim seal. The top is entirely open and is sealed by a double seaming of the cover onto its edge. The can is sealed with a sealing machine. Several types of these machines are on the market.

But there. All that information is right square in the canning bulletin, so there's no use of my telling you any more about it. In fact, I think perhaps I've been talking too much about canning lately. No more on the subject until next Monday, this coming Monday, as the down-casters say. And even then my subject will be bottling, rather than canning. Bottling summer fruit juices. Just one last question today. It's about living quarters for the youngest in summer.

"How can I keep my baby son's room comfortable enough for him to rest and sleep during all this dreadfully hot weather?" asks a young mother.

To begin with, keep the baby in the coolest part of the house or porch. A thermometer will be a help, if you don't know what is the coolest place. Then dress him in only the lightest clothing, such as a light weight band and a diaper. Keep his room well-ventilated. Even on very hot days moving air gives comfort. The windows will, of course, be kept open, except perhaps in the very hottest part of the day. An electric fan will keep the air in motion and relieve the very worst of the heat. The fan, of course, must be kept out of the children's reach. Place it so that the current of air blows upward -- toward the ceiling, not toward the baby. A draft, even in warmest weather, may be dangerous.

When the baby is sleeping on the porch, his mother will be on her guard against sudden drops in temperature and be ready to put on extra clothing or take him inside. Did I mention screens? I certainly meant to. Unless the porch is screened, the crib or carriage should be covered with netting to keep off flies and mosquitoes.

Tomorrow: "A Sunday Dinner for Company."